

6.—PROCESSION OF MUSK SHREWS

I noticed a phenomenon a few days ago which I describe herein.

While sitting in the drawing room of my bungalow and listening to the radio, my wife drew my attention to what appeared to her a snake passing from under one sofa to another. As I sat up to look towards this, I found that the so-called snake looked very peculiar in that it had no shiny look on it, nor its head and tail prominent. As I was looking on it, the tail part divided and presently two small musk shrews started running about the room. The rest of the so-called snake moved on. I then noticed that it was nothing but a mother shrew pulling behind a train of her young ones on their first outing. It appears that there were altogether five of the young ones, each keeping itself fixed by clinching with his teeth the point on the upper side of the junction of the tail with the body of another. A few minutes later, the mother shrew returned and went back with one young one to where she left the other three. She came back again and looked for the last lost one and after collecting him she went back to join the rest.

I wonder if this is the normal habit of the musk shrew. This is the first time that any of us has observed such a phenomenon.

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[‘Musk Rat’ and ‘Mole’ are names commonly given to the Musk Shrew, a common animal in India seen about dusk in gardens or entering houses after lamp light. The sharp piercing squeaks it gives out when frightened are the more usual indications of its presence. Though rat-like in general appearance, mole-like in its groping movements, it is neither rat nor mole—nor any form of rodent but a shrew, included with other forms of shrew in the order *Insectivora*. The habit of the young following the mother in a ‘train’ as described in the above note, was noted by ‘Eha’ in his ‘Tribes on my Frontier’. Shrews because of their insectivorous habits are useful creatures about the house. The Plague Commission also records their utility in the destruction of rats.—EDS.]

7.—THE HABITS OF THE BRUSH-TAILED PORCUPINE
(*ATHERURUS MACROURUS*)

While in the outer ranges of the Naga Hills of Assam during May 1947, I obtained from the Lhota Nagas some information on the habits of the Brush-tailed Porcupine.

It is known to them as the ‘Tsetang’, and is mainly confined to the extreme outer ranges; most Nagas from the inner hills do not know of it. Its invariable habitat is said to be heavy primary forest, and in this it differs from the Common Indian Porcupine which is distributed over the Naga Hills regardless of the biotope.